

November 1, 1962

Dear Mr. President:

The outcome of the Cuban crisis is being hailed with great enthusiasm by almost everyone over here, as you know. It is regarded as a great achievement for the West, particularly for the United States, and is considered a great success for you personally. Regardless of what it may mean in terms of the over-all interests and activities of the Soviet Union -- and I have Berlin particularly in mind -- you have averted an armed clash which could have grown to serious proportions, you have greatly enhanced the authority of the United States in world affairs, and you have established yourself with friend and foe alike as a strong leader at a time when strong leadership is sorely needed.

I am sure that the "tough-line" people, not recognizing that toughness is a means to an end and not an end or a policy in itself, will be saying "I told you so." It is my own firm conviction that your action in Cuba was successful because it was taken against an established background of calm firmness, moderation and restraint. With this background, your words and actions of last week stood out in such bold relief that they were thoroughly convincing.

I share the hope that this success can be exploited to achieve a lessening of tension, and believe that an early initiative along these lines could be most useful. It is on this subject that I would like to send you a few personal observations.

To permit the question of missiles in Turkey to be raised again would seem to deny the soundness of your position on the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Further, any official discussion of this subject would, in my judgment, have a serious morale effect in certain vital areas and would prove to be a most divisive issue at a time when we have achieved great unity within the Alliance. I am confident that there would be the strongest opposition, particularly on the part of the Greeks and the Turks to any consideration of the withdrawal of missiles from Turkey as a return gesture for Soviet action in Cuba.

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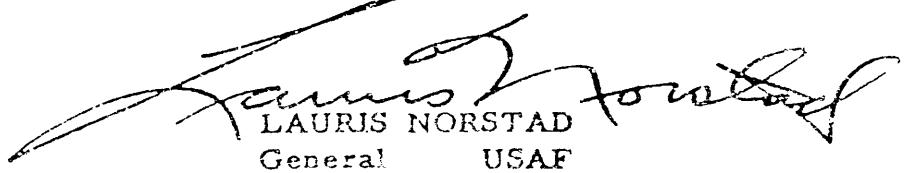
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You must have already been pressed to consider various force reduction, disengagement and denuclearization schemes, most of which have already been studied and have failed to stand up to searching analysis. As seen from here, a numerical reduction in Europe, if meaningful at all, would be disadvantageous to us because of the better geographical position of the USSR. The West would be weakened and tensions would thereby increase. Similarly, the events of the last year have served to emphasize the dangers of disengagement and of denuclearized zones, such as called for in the Rapacki Plan.

Any actions or gestures which do not have a sound military basis, or which are based upon trust rather than control, would cause great concern. Surely there can be no reductions in our military effectiveness without guarantees that at least equivalent security can be achieved by other means. In this connection, you may recall that on 17 November 1961 I addressed a letter to you which outlined broadly a control and inspection plan. This plan has been discussed off and on over the last five years and I believe it has some support among our European Allies. Perhaps France would continue to be cool to the proposition, and I have no basis for believing that Chancellor Adenauer would look more favorably on the idea today than he did in the spring of 1960. However, I believe that a strong position on the part of the United States at that time might well have persuaded the Chancellor. In the present circumstances, the weight of your judgment might be decisive. I realize that this control and inspection plan is not as comprehensive as some of the broad package proposals that have been considered in the past. However, it is simple enough to be workable and clear enough to have an impact on the public. Since there has been a certain amount of NATO support for this idea in the past, perhaps it could be introduced into the North Atlantic Council as a starting point for discussion, or as one of several ideas to be considered by that body.

Faithfully yours,

  
LAURIS NORSTAD  
General USAF

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

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